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The Catholic World
July, 1940, issue*

THE PAULIST PRESS
NEW YORK, N. Y.

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IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

The Sin of Anti-Semitism

BY THOMAS F. DOYLE

IT IS always timely to talk of the Jews and their problems, for, as Einstein has said, "anti-Semitism as a psychological phenomenon will always be with us so long as Jews and non-Jews are thrown together." In the summer of 1939, when the Jewish persecution in Germany assumed peak proportions, the backwash of intolerance threatened to sweep America. Preoccupation with the war in Europe and a universal, if tardy sympathy for the de-nationalized and harassed Jews served, however, to avert a threatened flowering of anti-Semitism in this country. The danger, nevertheless, although less immediate, still hovers over the head of American Jewry, to judge by the persistence and extent of hate-inspired propaganda, and no man can foretell when or with what grievous consequences the Damoclean sword may fall. In a more or less restrained form, anti-Semitism has

long existed in the United States, so that to discuss the position of the Jew and the Christian attitude toward him is not only in order, but, from a moral viewpoint, exceptionally so. The Jew needs to be defended, not merely from accusations grounded in falsehood, but from the glut of shibboleths that perennially surrounds him.

It may seem offensive to suggest that in building up a defense around the Jews Catholics should be advised not to associate themselves, even mentally, with pagan forces aligned against Judaism, but it would be emulating the ostrich to deny that many Catholics have been or are likely to be swept into movements to penalize or oppress the Jewish minority. Even as a matter of spiritual inventory, it is always profitable for Catholics, individually, to ask themselves how they stand on the Jewish question. There are minor manifestations of anti-Semitism to which it is not difficult for ordinary conscientious persons to become associated. If subterranean anti-Semitism were to emerge into the open, no Catholic could justly maintain an attitude of

aloofness or unconcern. As the late Heywood Broun put it, "There are no caves in which men can hide when their fellows cry out in agony."

Since Apion wrote his "Treatise against the Jews," that mischievous bible of anti-Semitism, the Jew has remained an enigma not only to his enemies, but at times, also, to his friends. He has groped his way from the ruins of his ravaged Temple through a fog of myth and slander that still obscures him in the eyes of his fellow men. Migrating from city to city, from country to country, his path has crossed, but never merged into the highway of European civilization. Because he has been a stranger he has been feared, and because he has known fear himself he has been content to remain unknown. In his isolation he has continued to be misunderstood, to be misrepresented, pillaged and oppressed. His blood has been spilled in unjust atonement for the death of the Crucified, whose cry for mercy has been drowned in tumults of fanaticism and hatred.

The miracle is not that the Jew has survived, but that in his survival

he has not been able to impress upon the minds of his enemies the obvious secret of his resiliency. Perhaps being blinded with the lust for blood and pillage, his Christian tormentors, defiant of Church and Pope, did not realize that the thousands they martyred would be replaced by the tens of thousands. Certainly they did not realize what a frightful indictment history would write nor how muffled would seem the voice of the Prince of Peace pleading above the endless cries of those whose race was His race and in whose Temple He had stood. The oldest inscription that mentions the Jew is found on a monument built by an Egyptian Pharaoh, who boasted that he had exterminated Israel and left none to survive. But the Jew has survived, and, surviving, has become an obsession to his persecutors and a challenge to mankind.

It is important to insist that anti-Semitism can exist even among cultured and disciplined groups, among which no hand would be raised to inflict actual physical harm on the Jews. Many otherwise blameless Catholics betray at times a tendency

to disparage the Jews and to accept without question every fresh calumny directed against them. Too seldom is the voice of the Gentile raised to defend the slandered Jew in his midst. It is rather his custom to listen to and propagate the sly anecdotes, the vague accusations, that, harmless enough in themselves, tend in the aggregate to give undue depth and bitterness to the wells of distrust that might have dried up if exposed to the sunshine of healthy, honest scrutiny. The drippings of poisonous propaganda in indiscriminating minds soon enough form a calcifying shell to imprison the natural virtues of kindness and goodwill. To minds so affected, it becomes an easy matter to justify penalties imposed on an unpopular minority. We saw proof of this when the storm of Nazi brutality broke over the German Jews, a small, thoroughly assimilated group, to whose defense their fellow-citizens might quickly have gathered had they not so completely and unthinkingly absorbed the anti-Semitic doctrines disseminated by Nazism. It may have been fear that restrained the Christian from extend-

ing the hand of friendship to the oppressed Jew, but even admitting the existence of an unopposable dictatorship, we are still humbled by the reflection that the citizens of a great and cultured nation, nominally Christian, should have exhibited such apparent indifference toward the persecution of the undeserving. Throughout the rest of the world the general reaction was one of pity and sorrow, but there was no concerted attempt even at a moral intervention. Worse than that, there existed among many Christians a rather smug acceptance of Hitlerian severity. The anti-Semitic propaganda so assiduously scattered had brought about the desired result. Men thought, "Well, they're getting what they deserve. You have to keep the Jews down, or they'll grab everything worth having." In the minds of upright Catholics such ideas often stirred vaguely but persistently until, when persecution had reached its flood, the truth, naked and terrible, shocked them into belated realization of their error. How many remain who have still to waken from the spell of mass-hatred is not to be ascertained. It is to be

feared, however, that an appreciable number of Catholics have yet to cleanse their minds of racial and religious intolerance.

To such the words of the pious and brilliant Pope Pius XI, commenting upon the words of the Canon of the Mass, *Sacrificium Patriarchae nostri Abrahæ*, may profitably be recalled. "Notice," he declared, "that Abraham is called our patriarch, our ancestor. Anti-Semitism is incompatible with the thought and sublime reality expressed in the text. It is a movement in which we Christians can have no part whatsoever. Anti-Semitism is unacceptable. Spiritually we are Semites."

The affinity between Judaism and Christianity is recognized by Germany's arch-enemy of both. He has linked Catholicism with "subversive" Judaism and called them "national enemies" to be "liquidated" in the Fatherland. Paganized Nazis have depicted Christ in caricature as having "a face with a hooked nose, hanging lips, piercing black eyes, and woolly hair." We deplore the sacrilegious insult, but we do not deny the truth of Christ's racial origin.

His mother, too, was of the race so thoroughly despised by the modern enemies of religion. So were St. Peter, the first Pope, and all of the Apostles. So, too, was St. Paul, the Vessel of Election. Indeed, so thoroughly was the early Church Jewish in outlook and membership that it required a vision from God to persuade St. Peter to admit the Gentiles.

Nearly seven hundred years ago, when the living Jewish generation was presented to the simple-minded people as torturers and murderers of Jesus and accusations of ritual murders revived, Pope Innocent IV, in a bull addressed to the bishops of France and Germany, condemned anti-Semitism in words that are singularly appropriate today. He condemned those who "falsely devised certain godless plans against the Jews, unjustly depriving them by force of their property and appropriating it themselves." "They ascribe," says this forthright condemnation, "every murder, wherever it happens to occur, to the Jews. And on the ground of this and other fabrications, they are filled with rage against them, rob them of their pos-

sessions without any formal accusation, without confession, and without legal trial and conviction, contrary to the privileges granted them by the Apostolic See. . . . They oppress the Jews by starvation, by imprisonment, and by tortures and suffering." Declaring that the Jews are in a worse plight, although under the rule of Christian princes, than when their ancestors were in the land of the Pharaohs, the sovereign pontiff ended with this challenging and still timely admonition: "We ordain that ye behave toward them in a friendly and kind manner. Whenever any unjust attacks upon them come under your notice, redress their injuries and do not suffer them to be visited in the future by similar tribulations."

Foreign observers have commented at various times on the American penchant for associations of every kind. Thousands of unions, fraternities, lodges, and clubs are listed in the political and social catalogue. It is all part of the human propensity to spread ideas and to secure cohesion of interests. If, in most cases, it is admitted that such groupings of in-

dividuals under national or local labels are inspired by worthy motives, it must also be conceded — and deplored — that this tendency toward the formation of associations often results in the perpetuation of doctrines and activities that, though permitted under the Constitution, are neither ethical nor politically wise. Many organizations exist in which anti-Semitism is openly or covertly propagated. The pity is that among the memberships of these organizations are sprinklings of Catholics who give rise to no little scandal, and to whom a word of friendly warning and advice should not be out of place. The organizations to which they have given allegiance, like the Pharisees mentioned in St. Luke, are, for all their pretentious Americanism, “full of rapine and iniquity.” Only the blind, the apostate, or the conscienceless Catholic is to be found enrolled in them.

A grave menace to the nation’s internal unity exists in these agencies of intolerance, but a more dangerous and perhaps more extensive threat exists in the anti-Semitic pamphleteer. He operates with a

concentrated and deadly persistence that is more to be feared than any violent and quickly-spent outburst of fury.

Among these pamphleteers is a gentleman who describes himself as a publicist-economist, a former newspaper man, who owes allegiance to no Church, but is "a believer in Christianity's Golden Rule." He states that he is not opposed to the Jews as a race or a nation, or as individuals, but for monetary, financial and political reasons. He calls his crusade a patriotic movement to end "Jewish anti-Americanism," and, incidentally, what he regards as the Jewish-inspired New Deal program. Among the titles of the pamphlets he has distributed at one to five cents a copy are: "Jews and Communism," "Political Alienism Must Be Destroyed," "Jersey Goes Jewish," "Jews Fight Americanization," "Hearst Fears Jew-Power," "Treason to America?," and "U. S. Invisible Government." The message of these pamphlets is that Jewish leadership caused the depression, that the Jews control the press, radio and screen, and that government is influenced by

Jewish advisers. The language is precise and insistent, but the "facts" are distorted to fit the writer's philosophy, which, in essence, seems to be that America belongs to everybody but the Jews. The extent of his antipathy toward the Jews may be gauged from the fact that among his publications is a review of the Protocols of Zion, which, in 1935, were stamped as a vicious lie and an impudent forgery by an impartial Swiss court. As a proof of the tragic consequences of such malicious propaganda, it should be remembered by those who sometimes belittle the seriousness of such impious writings, that when the Protocols were published in Russia great masses of the peasants rose in vengeance against the "alien Jews," tens of thousands of whom were massacred in recurrent pogroms. A bloody tribute, indeed, to the power for evil that lies in the written falsehood.

The gentleman whose mission I have set forth is as I have indicated, merely a representative of a numerous and articulate group of professional hate-breeders, who, under various guises, seek to influence the

popular mind. They understand human psychology well enough to seize their pens when the times are hard and the masses, in desperation, are ready to vent their despair on the most convenient scapegoat available.

The charge made by anti-Semites that Jews exercise an undue economic influence in the United States is one calculated to arouse considerable resentment against them. The facts, however, are so obviously to the contrary that one wonders why so much credence is given to statements of this nature. Is popular antipathy toward the Jews so deep that it makes straight thinking impossible? When the Nazis were beginning to confiscate Jewish possessions and to devise new economic shackles, an investigation was made into the status of the Jews in the United States by *Fortune*, an impartial non-Jewish magazine. The findings of the survey were, briefly, that Jewish dominance in American industry was a pure myth and that the arguments of the anti-Semites in this country were based on nothing more tangible than isolated and distorted data. *Fortune*

showed that in banking the Jews occupy a very minor position and that in heavy industry their influence is still more negligible. In the automobile industry the number of Jews occupying important executive positions could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The coal, shipping, rubber and transportation industries were almost entirely non-Jewish. "A vast continent of heavy industry and finance may," said *Fortune*, "be staked out in which Jewish participation is incidental or non-existent. . . . The Jews are so far from controlling the most characteristic of present-day American activities that they are hardly represented in them at all."

In the light industries, Jewish representation is appreciable, but only in the clothing business is found the outstanding exception to the statement that Jewish industrial interests are generally in the minority. The Jews control about 50 per cent of the liquor business, excepting the domestic wine industry, where their participation is slight. Even in retailing, the Jewish interest, although rather large in New York and other

large cities, is, so far as the entire country is concerned, of minor importance.

The anti-Semites have made much of Jewish "control" of the newspaper and magazine fields, but here again their contentions do not stand up under scrutiny. According to the *International Yearbook of Editor and Publisher* there are approximately 916 daily newspapers in 544 cities of over 15,000 population. Of these only 33 newspapers, or 3½ per cent, are owned or controlled by Jews. One of these is *The New York Times*, probably the most outstandingly impartial and reliable newspaper in the country. As to general magazines, only three are classified as Jewish in control. In book publication, they are recent but unimportant competitors. Only in three important centers do the Jews dominate the job and trade printing plants.

In the nation's agricultural life, the Jews have a representation of only one to thirty-six, as compared with non-Jews. Attempts to establish colonies for Jews on the land have been singularly unsuccessful except near the big cities.

Only in radio, the theater and the moving picture industry can anything like a plausible case be made to support anti-Semitic charges. Of the two national broadcasting chains, one is under Jewish control, and the other, though non-Jewish in management, is headed by a Jew. In the movie field, it is admitted that although the Jews do not hold a financial monopoly, they do have an almost complete control of the production of pictures. For some years the National Legion of Decency has been keeping a watchful eye on Hollywood productions, but this scrutiny is not inspired by anti-Jewish sentiment. Even if the making of films was an exclusively non-Jewish enterprise, there would exist the same desire to check tendencies that deprave character and inculcate immoral beliefs and sentiments.

Attention is sometimes called to the great numbers of Jews found in the various professions. Complaint is heard frequently of Jews forging ahead in business at the expense of Christian competitors. If the Jew succeeds in his profession, or in his business pursuits, such success can-

not justly be converted into an argument against him. The Jew is no smarter than his Christian neighbor, but due to the environment of ill-concealed resentment in which he exists, he is forced to apply himself with more than ordinary diligence to the business of securing an economic foothold. His superior ability is generally acquired at the cost of much self-sacrifice, and to deny him the fruits of his effort is to place a penalty on ambition and perseverance and the dozen other attributes that characterize the successful member of professional or industrial groups. To assail the Jew who happens to be more successful than the Christian is to admit the sin of envy, out of which a great deal of anti-Semitism springs. In a general sense this envy is baseless, for, though many Jews are rich and occupy important positions in the economic world, nearly half of the Jewish people are not merely poor, but poor to the verge of actual want.

Perhaps the most mischievous of current fallacies is the belief that political Communism is largely Jewish-inspired and Jewish-supported.

Here, again, the pamphleteers argue against an overwhelming weight of contradictory evidence. Communism has roots in Manichaeism, which originated in Persia, and in Hellenic Gnosticism. It can be found in the Republic of Plato, who was no lover of democracy, and who advocated a community in goods and women. In Biblical times and in early Christianity, communism of the noblest and most ethical nature is known to have prevailed. In the Bible we read: "Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them, and brought the prices of things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made according to need." Among heretical Christian sects we find the Waldenses, the Albigenses and the Anabaptists adopting a communist form of life. Many of the Romans followed the communist ideas of the Stoic Zeno and some Roman writers are said to have found among the early Germans (page Mr. Hitler!) a society based on communism. In the United States communism has been practiced in

many sectarian communities. In New York the Shakers, in Pennsylvania the Harmonists and in Ohio the Zoarites were typical of scores of groups which adopted a communist system before the Jews attained any degree of prominence in European life. These Utopian communities did not last long and by 1860 the movement had petered out.

But what about modern Communism? ask the anti-Semites. What about Karl Marx, who was a Jew, and who is known as the apostle of that form of Communism in which force is regarded as necessary to overthrow the existing order, and which, as exemplified in Russia, has been built through mass murder and the extirpation of religion? Well may the Jew counter query, what about the preachers of revolt who preceded or were contemporary with Marx? The essence of the Marxian program is found in the cry of Baboeuf, the French revolutionist, "Let everything return to chaos, and from chaos let there rise a new and regenerated world." The modern concept of communism is found in the writings of non-Jewish theorists

whose influence helped to bring about the French Revolution. When Louis XVI, in his Temple prison, came across the works of Rousseau and Voltaire, he was moved to exclaim: "Those two men have destroyed France!" Among historians living in or close to the age of Marx were several outstanding non-Jews who stressed class-consciousness—Augustin Thierry, Adolphe Thiers, Mignet, De Tocqueville and Macaulay. It would seem that though the accepted father of materialistic Communism was Jewish, his fellow travelers in the world of social thought, from whom he absorbed much, were decidedly not of the same race.

To stress the argument against the supposed predilection of the Jews for Communism, it should be recalled that in the United States, where the Jewish population approximates 4,500,000, there were, in 1936, only 80,159 votes cast for the Communist candidate in the Presidential election. How many of this comparatively small minority were Jews is a matter of pure speculation. In other countries we note somewhat similar refutations of Jewish-supported Com-

munism. There are very few Jews in Sweden, but in 1930 the Communists in that country numbered 18,000. In Germany, where, in 1930, there were 570,000 Jews, a Communist vote of 4,500,000 was registered. There are about a million Communists in France, where less than a quarter of a million of the inhabitants are Jews. In general, it is observed that in countries where Communism is fairly strong, the Jewish population is so small as to be almost negligible. Russia excepted, Communists are numerically weakest where the Jewish population is comparatively large. The facts tends very completely to refute the assertion that Judaism and Communism, rather than being natural bedfellows, are on poor speaking terms. Among scores of Jewish writers who have presented a powerful case against the Communism of Karl Marx are Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, and the English Jew, Professor Harold J. Laski, whose work on Communism expresses the whole truth of Judaism's as well as Christianity's aversion toward the modern debased form of Communistic teaching. On the other hand, it

would be easy to compile a list of at least sixty non-Jewish writers, English, French, Russian, German and American, who have propagated Communistic ideas.

It is folly not to recognize that the Jew has made unique contributions to the culture of the world, or to suggest that as a unit in many nations he cannot continue as a useful and indispensable force. The Jew loves life, has clung to it in spite of pogrom and oppression, and in his limited sphere he has nurtured a fine democracy. His belief in God has remained fixed and irradicable and in the long torture of the dispersion he has clung to his faith in the Messiah who was to redeem his race. The shrinking humility that has been associated with him is a mere defensive mask to hide his pride from those who would reduce him to impotency. The false humility must go, but the pride is a birthright that no man should snatch from the race that bore Christ and out of which the Church was formed.

In the centuries of their persecution, the Jews were forced from the

universities and their contributions to science and progress were as a consequence meager. But in periods of toleration, they have borne their full share of wealth to the storehouse of knowledge, and mankind is their debtor to no mean degree.

Says the historian, W. E. H. Lecky: "They were the most skillful physicians and ablest financiers and among the most profound philosophers. While they were only second to the moderns in the cultivation of natural science, they were also the chief interpreters to Western Europe of Arabian learning." Among European Jews whom posterity acclaims we find such names as Benjamin Disraeli, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, the Herschels, Lord Reading, ambassador and viceroy, Sir George Jessel, solicitor general of England in the first Gladstone administration; Baruch Spinoza and Joseph Israels, who came from Holland; Ehrlich, Wassermann, Heine, Mendelssohn, Offenbach, Rubenstein and Einstein, to mention but a few of Germany's distinguished scientists, musicians and scholars; Henri Dunant, founder of the International Red Cross, who was

born in Switzerland; Georg Brandes, of Denmark, renowned literary critic; Antokolsky, Mendeleef and David Lubin, founder of the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome, who came from Russia.

The Jew stands high among the scientists and inventors in America. Two of the American recipients of Nobel Prizes were Jews. One is Dr. Karl Landsteiner, of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. The second is Albert Michelson, who has been described as "the most distinguished of American physicists." Dr. Simon Flexner is internationally known for his work in the field of infantile paralysis. Others that come to mind are Dr. Bela Schick, now of New York, who discovered the diphtheria antitoxin; Dr. Carl Koller, ophthalmic surgeon, who introduced cocaine as a local anaesthetic; Dr. Milton Rosenau, director of the School of Public Health of Harvard University, acclaimed for his work with antitoxins and vaccines, and Dr. Abraham Jacobi, former President of the Academy of Medicine, an outstanding specialist in the field of infant and child health. Noted chem-

ists include Julius Steiglitz, Moses Gomberg and Fritz Huber. One of the greatest bridge engineers in the United States is Leon M. Moisseef, who designed the Manhattan Bridge and the Interstate Bridge connecting Philadelphia with Camden, N. J. Emile Berliner, a German Jew, worked with Thomas A. Edison in perfecting the telephone transmitter, and has contributed to the perfection of the motion picture projector. David Sarnoff, of the Radio Corporation of America, has participated actively in the field of radio invention. Dr. Arthur Korn is the creator of a new device to transmit photographs by radio.

In art, music and literature the Jew has carved an enviable niche. The music and entertainment world have been especially enriched by his contribution. The faculties of our universities are liberally interspersed with Jews who are world-acknowledged authorities in the fields of economics and sociology. For his philanthropic enterprises the Jew merits our profound esteem. There is no community with a sizable Jew-

ish population in which provision does not exist for the care of the aged, the orphan or the sick.

"If we could but have the eyes to see," said Woodrow Wilson, "we should easily discover how very much besides religion we owe to the Jews." From 1654 they have been coming to the country, in a steady trickle or in flood proportions, depending upon the changing conditions in Europe. Rich or poor, skilled or unskilled, they have added a loyal quota to the building of a new empire. They were the peddlers of Colonial days, carrying their wares from farm to farm. Energetic and commercially gifted, the Ashkenazic Jews, who were Germans, differing from the more studious and cultured Sephardics, were the owners of stores in which the great department stores of today had their origin. When the American Revolution broke out there were less than 3,000 Jews in the country; in 1850 there were 50,000; in 1880 about 750,000. After 1880 came the great influx of East European Jews, fleeing from tyranny in Russia, Poland and Rumania. Fully 3,500,000 of the Jews in the United States today are

of East European descent or birth. To these are now being added the refugees fortunate enough to escape from the iron rule of Nazi Germany.

The Jew, in America and elsewhere, has proved to be a good soldier, a useful and distinguished citizen, with a record against which the slanders of anti-Semitism should not be permitted to prevail. He sets the modern world the problem, to quote Dr. Chaim Weizmann, prominent Zionist leader, "of finding a place for him in its social structure which shall enable him to live as a human being without demanding that he cease to be a Jew." To Christian Americans this is a challenge that must be met squarely and honestly. The position of the Jew must be independent of his economic, political or religious philosophy, and the Christian who does not recognize this claim is an anti-Semite, regardless of how kindly he may be or how many Jews he may claim among his friends. He is anti-Semitic if he allows the outpourings of demagogues, past and present, from Cicero to Hitler, to influence him in his attitude toward the Jewish minority. If the Christian, in his

social or business life, hears repeated any of the innumerable stale scandals that have been hurled at the Jews, he favors anti-Semitism if he fails to offer a word of manly rebuttal. If he has respect for his own position, the Christian will not undermine it by a tacit acceptance of evil propagandizing, public or private. The Christian rule does not prescribe merely a passive acceptance of the divine tenets. It should govern the thought, word and act of every waking hour. It should compel the rebuking of the slanderer as well as the condemnation of the murderer or the thief. It should provide the salve of charity for those who suffer or have burdens to bear. The Jew, so long as he remains an object of ridicule, discrimination or hatred, has an urgent and valid claim upon his Christian fellows.

The love that Christ preached is the core of the most satisfying philosophy from which men have derived, or can ever hope to derive, comfort. The love of one's neighbor can exist even where a natural dislike, based on lack of kinship or understanding or any other cause, prevails. We are

not obliged to like the Jews. Many of us have a hearty dislike even of some of our co-religionists. Nevertheless, if we heed the commandment, treating others as we would have them treat us, our love is pure and spiritually ennobling. It means that we can be just even when the heart is cold. We can give sympathy and aid when the human impulse is to turn aside or close our ears. We can tend the sick even when their diseases are nauseating and repulsive to our offended senses. To like our neighbor is a commendable thing, a human trait to admire. But to love him, especially in the face of an implanted or spontaneous aversion, is perfection itself. There is not a Catholic in the world, warmed by such a love, to whom the message of anti-Semitism is not a mockery and an insult.



